THE UNITED NATIONS SOCIAL AGENDA

UNITED NATIONS

1991: CALENDAR OF SPECIAL DAYS

8 March	International Women's Day
7 April	World Health Day
5 June	World Environment Day
26 June	International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking
8 September	International Literacy Day
1 October	International Day for the Elderly
7 October	Universal Children's Day
9 October	International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction
24 October	United Nations Day
1 December	World AIDS Day
5 December	International Volunteer Day for Development
10 December	Human Rights Day

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

27 January-1 February (Vienna)
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

28 January-8 March (Geneva)
Commission on Human Rights

30 January-8 February (Vienna)
Commission on Narcotic Drugs

11-20 February (Vienna)
Commission for Social Development

21-22 February (Vienna)
United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Aging

27 February-8 March (Vienna)
Commission on the Status of Women

March/April—August/September (Geneva)
Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

7-31 May (New York) 3-26 July (Geneva)
Economic and Social Council

27-29 May (Vienna)
Youth Forum of the United Nations System

1-5 September (Kuala Lumpur)
International Commission for the Prevention of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency

25 November-13 December (Geneva)
Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

1990s: A NEW SETTING FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

With the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the International Development Strategy for the 1990s, the world community recognizes that the global development agenda will not be meaningful unless an effort is made to incorporate social policies and goals into those intended to stimulate economic prosperity.

The Report on Human Development (1990), produced by the United Nations Development Programme suggests that human progress may be measured by advances in three main areas: longevity, knowledge and living standards. However, our pursuit of happiness does not end there, nor is it always linked to income level. People do not isolate different aspects of their lives, but rather have an overall sense of well-being. Development efforts should integrate the entire spectrum of activities through which human potential can be expanded.

The United Nations over the years has built up a body of guidelines and plans of action which governmental and voluntary organizations may use as a "social technology" to forge a better link between economic growth and human welfare. The documents include the following:

Social Development

- ***Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes in the Near Future***
- *Programme of Co-operative Action against Hunger*
- *Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000*

Education

- ***Plan of Action for the World Decade for Cultural Development***
- *Plan of Action for the Eradication of Illiteracy by the Year 2000*
- *Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs*

Family

- ***Action Programme for the Year of the Family (1994)***

Aging

- ***The Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging***
- *Action Programme on Aging for 1992 and Beyond*

Disabled Persons

- ***World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons***
- *A Society for All by the Year 2010*
- *Tallinn Guidelines for Action on Human Resources Development in the Field of Disability*

Youth and Children

- ***Guidelines for Further Planning and Suitable Follow-up in the Field of Youth***
- *Draft World Youth Programme of Action for the Year 2000 and beyond*
- *Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children*

Women

- ***Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000***

Health

- ***Health for All by the Year 2000***
- *Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of AIDS*

Crime

- ***Guiding Principles for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in the Context of Development and a New International Economic Order***
- *United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency*

Drugs

- ***Global Programme of Action on Drug Abuse Control***

The above selection of documents, while far from being exhaustive, underscores the message that people must be at the centre of all development efforts.

HUMAN RESOURCES: A NEGLECTED DIMENSION OF DEVELOPMENT

Testimony to the setbacks experienced in the 1980s may be found in woeful statistics: 950 million people live in poverty, over 500 million are undernourished or malnourished, almost a billion are illiterate, most of them in the developing world, but some 14 million in industrialized countries.

To change the unsatisfactory record of previous decades, a planning process which is more responsive to people's needs is emerging.

The tendency to approach social problems as if they were self-contained compartments is being replaced by a new realism. Policy-makers, Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and communities at the grass-roots level have recognized that the overlap between the problems of crime and drugs, poverty and environment, unemployment and education is such that artificial divisions need to be removed. The 1990s can and should be a decade of human development.

The United Nations Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes encourage action by the NGO community to enhance participatory development, enabling people to help themselves. They may be used to facilitate, maintain and correct the conditions for coping with daily life.

AGING: HUMANITY COMES OF AGE

We are in the midst of a major demographic transition: in 1980, there were an estimated 380 million people aged 60 and above; by the year 2025, there will be more than 1 billion—over 14 per cent of the world's population. This trend is bound to present one of the main challenges to international and national planning efforts as we approach the next century.

The International Plan of Action on Aging is an important component of the social agenda that the United Nations has been formulating. The General Assembly has designated 1 October as International Day for the Elderly. A full calendar of activities for 1992—the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Plan of Action by the World Assembly on Aging—is being drawn up. The draft action programme on aging for 1992 and beyond encourages the development of national programmes for the elderly involving co-operation among neighbourhoods, communities, the business sector, professional associations, voluntary bodies and the United Nations.

Early in 1991, a new initiative will give momentum to international efforts on behalf of the elderly. In Paris, the "Banyan Foundation: A World Fund for Aging" is to be established under the patronage of the United Nations. Its name derives from the banyan tree, the symbol for longevity and wisdom, which was used as the logo of the 1982 World Assembly. The Foundation's activities will cut across international boundaries and supplement national budgets to empower the elderly with the ability to contribute to their society.

YOUTH AND CHILDREN: INVESTING IN FUTURE GENERATIONS

Before you finish reading this pamphlet, 50 children will have lost their lives to readily preventable diseases. By day's end the toll will be close to 40,000. The same was true yesterday, the same will be true tomorrow. . .unless we decide to make a difference.

The World Summit for Children held on 29 and 30 September 1990, organized by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), set a monumental goal: to halve the child mortality rate in the world by the year 2000. The Declaration and the Plan of Action that resulted from the Summit commit countries "to give every child a better future".

Seventeen international youth NGOs have formed the First Youth NGO Consultative Group for Children to examine the role youth can play in helping to reach the goals established by the Summit for the 1990s. UNICEF's 34 national committees and 119 field offices continue to promote the concept of "youth in service to children" at the field level.

In order not to lose the momentum of International Youth Year (1985), the UN Office at Vienna is preparing a programme of action for the Year's tenth anniversary that will capitalize on opportunities for improving the situation of today's children and, therefore, tomorrow's world.

FAMILY: A MICROCOSM OF DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS

For thousands of years, the family has been society's most durable link and the most effective means of transmitting and maintaining the distinctive characteristics of a people's culture. Today this bonding factor is being eroded as the family is faced with the disintegrating forces of modern life.

Coming up in 1994 is the International Year of the Family, organized around the theme "Family: resources and responsibilities in a changing world". The Programme of Action for the Year will help to identify and counteract the factors contributing to family disintegration.

A small organizational secretariat for the Year, located in the UN Office at Vienna, has set the ball rolling. At its 1990 session, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to establish a voluntary fund for the preparation for and observance of the Year and invited all States and interested organizations to contribute to that fund. NGO committees on the family in Vienna and New York, as well as UNESCO's NGO Standing Committee, are doing the groundwork for the Year at the non-governmental level.

The family is often the starting point for action to combat crime, drug and alcohol abuse, to solve the problems of the elderly and of youth. Thus, issues related to families offer an unusually comprehensive point of reference for NGOs' efforts to bring the human dimension of development into its work.

The United Nations Social Agenda provides NGOs and other interested individuals with briefs on social issues being dealt with by the UN system. More information on all of these subjects is available from:

Economic and Social Development
and Human Rights Programmes Section/CPMD
Department of Public Information
Room S-1040
United Nations
New York, NY 10017, USA

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